



FranceTNP2010
Turning commitments into actions
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NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT: FRANCE'S CONCRETE COMMITMENT - DISMANTLING THE GROUND-TO-GROUND COMPONENT -

Working paper submitted by France

Giving up the ground-to-ground component

The French ground-to-ground component was composed of short-range mobile missiles and strategic missiles of the Albion plateau.

Drawing conclusions from the evolutions of the strategic context, France decided to **give up this component of its nuclear deterrence force** on 22 February 1996.

Steps toward giving up the ground-to-ground component

1991-1992 decisions

- **early removal** of short-range Pluton missiles;
- short-range Hades missiles **stopped being manufactured** and decision **not to deploy** this system;
- the S45 ground-to-ground strategic-missile programme – meant to replace the Albion plateau S3D missiles – **was given up**.

1996 decisions

- **decommissioning** of the Albion plateau ground-to-ground missiles and **closure** of this site;
- **final withdrawal** of the Hades weapons system.
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The 30 short-range Hades mobile missiles were dismantled by 1997, the 18 S3D strategic missiles by 1998.

Dismantling the Albion plateau (1996-1998)

Dismantling the Albion plateau was a complex operation that started on 16 September 1996. Significant constraints needed to be taken into account: **security, respect for the environment, site conversion** and consequences for **local daily life and economy**.

This specific yard (almost **800 hectares**) involved many people and vast amounts of equipment. The dismantling of the 18 launching areas required:

- **over 63,000 hours of work;**
- **over 630 tonnes of relocated material.**

Each step of the dismantling operation **required high technicality**: extracting a missile head called for **162 different operations**. After the nuclear warheads and pyrotechnic devices had been withdrawn, missile destruction required not only eliminating the missile's body but also its propellant.

All sites, material and facilities that had been in contact with nuclear material were subject to **non-contamination control and certification**.

With the dismantling of one missile per month, the Albion plateau's denuclearisation was effective on 25 February 1998. It cost approximately 75 M€.

3. Towards a treaty banning short- and intermediate-range ground-to-ground missiles

At the international level, France continues the determined efforts for disarmament to which it has committed at home by giving up its ground-to-ground component. The President of the French Republic thus proposed opening negotiations on a treaty banning short- and intermediate-range ground-to-ground missiles (**Cherbourg speech, 21 March 2008**).

France's proposal was the basis for the **European Union action plan on disarmament**, endorsed by all 27 EU Heads of State and Government at the December 2008 Council, which it puts forward in view of the Non-Proliferation Treaty 2010 Review Conference.

«The European Union proposes to start consultations on a treaty banning short- and intermediate-range ground-to-ground missiles.»